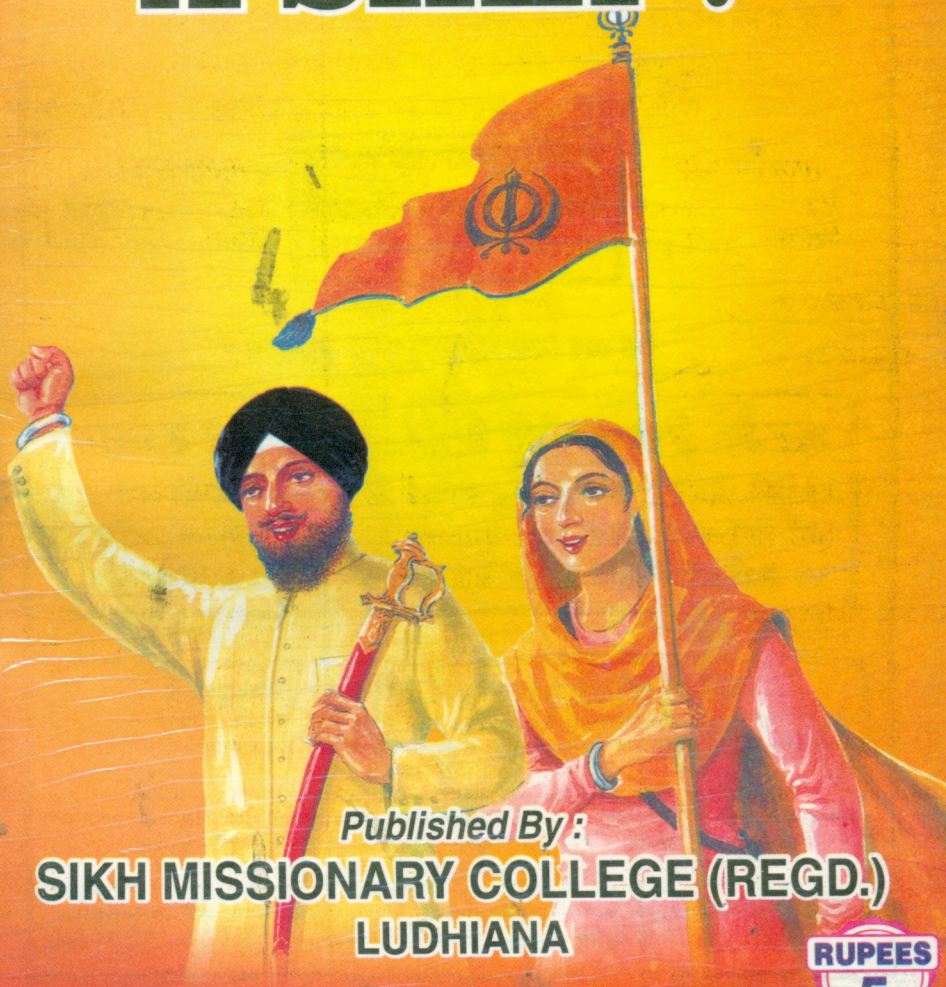




Publication No. 53

WHY AM I A SIKH ?



Published By :
SIKH MISSIONARY COLLEGE (REGD.)
LUDHIANA

RUPEES
5

Publication No.

53

WHY AM I A SIKH?



Published by
SIKH MISSIONARY COLLEGE (REGD.)
LUDHIANA

Why am I a Sikh?

Published by : Sikh Missionary College (Regd.)
Typesetting by : Surjit Computers, Jalandhar. Ph. : 0181-2432046
Printed at : Bright Printers, Jalandhar. Ph. : 0181-2292202

Available at :

SIKH MISSIONARY COLLEGE (REGD.)

1051/14, Field Ganj, Ludhiana - 141 008. Phone : 0161-5021815, 6451305

Website : www.sikhmissionarycollege.org

E-mail : query@smcludhiana.com

Delhi Sub-Office : C-135, Mansarovar Garden,
New Delhi-110015 Ph. : 011-65330502

and from all the Circles of Sikh Missionary College (Regd.)

WHY AM I A SIKH?

Because I have not to worship and appease many a god and goddesses and seek the help of so many of them to meet my need. Rather, I depend upon one God, who is Omnipresent and is with me where-so-ever I be.

Sahib mera eko hai, eko hai bhai eko hai.

Asa M. 1.

My Master is One, One and the only One, O brother.

Gun eho hor nahi koi, na ko hoya no ko hoi.

Asa M. 1.

His greatness lies in the fact that there is no other God nor has there ever been one, nor will there ever be.

My God has no equal and has none to fear from. By praying to Him I seek the protection of One, who is Himself fearless and makes me lose all my fears. My God is kind and merciful and forgives my sins, if I sincerely pray for that. My God is all powerful and my enemies, therefore dare not touch me. I have no rituals to perform to call Him to my side. I simply meditate on certain of His qualities and He stands by me in the particular form and shape of that quality.

Sikh Gurus even disapproved Arti, the popular mode of Hindu worship . When Guru Nanak visited Jagannath, he was invited by the high priest to assist in the Hindu worship which was being performed. At such worship, Salver studded with gems is produced, on which are

placed flowers, lamps and incense. The salver is then moved before the idol to the accompaniment of drums, bells conches and, occasionally cymbals. Guru Nanak instead of joining worship, uttered :

Let sun and moon be earthen lamps. And orbs of stars
be like rubies,

Let there be incense of Chandan and fly-whisk of
winds

And blooming flowers of all vegetation be showered,

How wonderful this Arti must be, O remover of fears,

This Arti in which "the kettle-drum is of boundless
word".

He says,

"The Gods and goddesses are worshipped, O brother,

What ought we beg and what can they give.

They are just like a stone in water, O brother,

It sinks down in it."

Guru Arjan declared,

He who forsake God and attaches himself to idols,
shall abide in hell".

Kabir, argues,

"If sculptor carving a stone turneth it into an idol, and

in doing so putteth his foot upon its breast :

If it were a real God it would eat him up."

I can meditate on His qualities anywhere, any time and on every occasion and my seeking. His help is so simple and easy that it tempts me to be a Sikh.

Because I need not go from door to door to seek guidance and advice. I have all guidance and advice incorporated in one and only one Holy Granth. Sikh Guru declared in Mundavani :

"In this dish are placed three things : Truth, Harmony and Wisdom. These are seasoned with the Name of God which is the basis of all : who ever eats and enjoys it, shall be saved."

Guru Gobind Singh enjoined upon Sikhs :

"The song of Nam, the Guru Granth.

All Sikhs should seek the master in his word,

And bow to Guru Granth as, my Successor".

Sikh Gurus deprecated the Hindu practice of dancing when singing His Name. Guru Nanak says :

"Dancing, hopping and jumping are the pleasures of mind,

Guru Nanak telleth thee, that those who hath reverence of Him i.e. who live in the way He pleaseth

Will find their minds filled with love of Him.”

It is the fountain head from where all knowledge springs. Through it I see my God visualised. It gives me a clear vision and a true perspective of this world and the world to come. It has in it the axioms of a happy life—a life of beauty and joy for ever and for ever, it makes me slight the most fearful—the very death itself, that emanates all fears. It brings home to me all the different values of life—personal and impersonal, social and individual, worldly and heavenly, pertaining to my soul and my God. With it I soar to immeasurable heights. With it I go fathoms deep in successful search of invaluable rubies and diamonds and with it I stand exalted high as Heavens. It puts into motion the innermost strings of my life. It carries me there where human intellect fails. It makes me distinguish right from wrong and puts me on the right track. It is a guide that never deserts. It has a transcendent beauty, an excellent music and an ambrosial food for my yearning soul and through it I feel one with universe, nay, one with God Himself. Its constant enlightenment lest me not swerve from Sikhism.

Because I am never alone. My Guru though invisible to human eye, is always with me. He is a great warrior unsurpassed in valour, a knight among heroes, saviour of the innocent, kind and merciful and noblest of the noble souls who always comes to help me wherever and whenever I meditate and call on Him for help. When I am upset and feel lonely, when I am faced with insurmountable difficulties and dangers, when enemies

seem to overpower me I concentrate on his dynamical personality and so he is there by my side. Isn't it then worthwhile to be a Sikh?

Guru Gobind Singh, the Tenth Master, has put on me three Commands—Service, Simran and Sacrifice; Service of the humble and the needy, Simran (remembering) of the Master's great qualities and Sacrifice of self to uphold the right and the just. These are the picks of human excellence. To achieve this excellence I hold on as a Sikh.

Because Sikhs are a martial community, they always prefer to die heroic death for a noble cause. They take it as the sweet Will of God and grumble not, when faced with death. Their past history abounds with such deaths and they recollect their innumerable martyrs in their regular prayers every morning and evening to imbibe their spirit of sacrifice. It enlivens their souls and reminds them of Guru Gobind Singh's command. To die a coward is the greatest sin with them. A death in the battlefield is what they covet most. They would not turn their back on the enemy. It is their martial spirit that has given them a place and an identity in the world. This incentive to martialism keeps me a Sikh.

Because of the heavenly nectar, Amrit that Guru gave me, that I am Sikh. It gives me the supermacy of Nam, hardness of steel, coolness of water and sweetness of honey with it, I feel transformed to super humanity. I imbibe the spirit of Guru Gobind Singh and present a look of the very Guru himself, With my long hair and comely

beard I vie in appearance with pious men. I feel a great confidence in me with a sword in hand to safeguard the interest of weak and the humble, to protect the honour and chastity of woman and to defend my people and my land against aggression. What a wonderful transformation by this Amrit, that makes me a Sikh !

Because practising Sikhism is so simple no complexities of rituals and ceremonies. Sikh Gurus tried to remove the wrong notion of the efficacy of pilgrimage. Guru Nanak says :

“Why wash only the body from outside, wash the mind, clean it of the dirt of desire, and tread the path of salvation.”

He further declared that “Pilgrimage does not have the value of even a mustard seed. My place of pilgrimage is the word contemplation and divine knowledge within me.”

“Without the Lord (in mind) all pious deeds are illusion

Without the Lord (in mind) recitations, austerities, disciplines actions are left here.”

Hence Guru Arjan declared.

“I do not keep the Hindu fast, nor that observed by Mohammedans in Ramzan.

I serve Him and Him alone, who is my ultimate refuge,

I believe in the same master who is also Allah.

I have broken with the Hindu and Muslim.

I won't go on Hajj to Mecca, nor do I worship at the Hindu places,

I shall serve Him alone and no other,

I won't worship idols nor read Namaz,

I shall lay my heart at the feet of the one Supreme Being.

We are neither Hindus nor Mussalmans,

Our bodies and souls are gifts of that God, whom Muslims call Allah and Hindus as Ram."

Fasts and austerities, renunciation and reclusions or heavens and hells; are abandoned. I have no conchshells to blow, no bells to ring, no dieties to appease, no pilgrimages to undertake. I preserve my long hair and beard as nature has given them to me and keep a comb to clean them every day. To look decent and civilized I keep my loins covered with a Kachhehra. I wear a sword to meet unforeseen enemies and iron-bracelet an emblem to remind me of the bondage (discipline) to my Guru. I eat when hungry, wear when naked and enjoy as I will, provided these do not pollute my mind, nor harm my body. The only criterion with me is to preserve a clear conscience and rear a sound body. This simplicity of faith and freedom of joy are the greatest inducements for me to be a Sikh.

Because it is not a faith to be practised in temples or

live in seclusions. I have to practise it in daily life; behind the plough, on the roadside, in the workshop and on the table, I have to be a Sikh at home, a Sikh in a society and a Sikh in battle-field.

“Nama kahe Trilochana mukh te Ram Samal
Hath paon kar kam sabh chit nirinjan nal”.

Nama says to Trilochan, “While engaged in work with hands or feet, you may sing His Name.”

Guru Nanak solemnly declared the possibility of the attainment of salvation by a householder. Nanak, I have met the true Guru and my union with God is accomplished. Even while men laugh, and play, and dress, and eat, salvation can be obtained.

I have to be a Sikh in thought, word and deed, a Sikh in my dealings with the world at large and a Sikh-like in all stations of life. It is a life to be lived and not a tenet or a philosophy to be preached. No recitations are of any avail, unless I live up to these. It is the action that counts with me, I must not say but do, and I must appear as I am and not what I am not. No show, no deceitful presentation of myself is my creed. It is, therefore, that I am a Sikh.

Because I need no priestly order to redeem my sins. I am priest to myself. I can stand alone and pray to God for my redemption. He listens to my prayers. I have also full faith in congregation of my people—devotees of my Guru. We sit together in the presence of our Guru—Holy

Granth, sing in chorus hymns from the Granth, till we are all one and in harmony with the Guru. We stand up then and pray with folded hands for redemption of our sins, for proper guidance in life and for His blessings for the entire mankind and the Universe. There I feel one with universe, a member of the common brother-hood and lie prostrate at His feet with all humbleness praying for the common good of all-friends or foes. What a wonderful prayer ! Hence I am a Sikh.

Because Sikhism recognises no caste or creed as high or low, nor is there any colour, country or race bar. Saint Kabir, in Adi Granth, in a satirical tone says :

“There is no clan or caste while dwelling in the womb. Every thing is Created from the seed of Brahman (God), Say O Pandit ! when were the Brahmans created ?

Do not waste thy life by proclaiming the Brahmanhood.

If thou art a Brahman, born of a Brahman woman.

Why hast thou not come through another way?”

Its doors are open to the black and the white, to the western and the eastern and to the Negro and the American alike. There are no untouchables with the Sikhs. They run free community kitchens and call them Guru-ka-Langar. Because I have my own festivals like Gurpurbs, Hola, Baisakhi. etc.

Dussehra and Diwali, the two important festivals of the

Hindus, are celebrated to mark the death of Ravana at the hands of Sri Ram Chandra and the return of victorious Ram Chandra to his kingdom, Ajudia. The Sikhs do not regard the killing of Ravana by Ram Chandra a virtuous act. Guru Nanak said :

“The blind ten headed Ravana was beheaded,

But what greatness was achieved by killing Ravana.”

As the Sikhs do not regard Krishna as incarnation of God, therefore, they do not participate in the Hindu festivals of Janam Ashtmi, the birthday of Shri Krishna.

Whosoever may contribute the ration cooked in the Langar is considered to be that of the Guru, there is only the service that they do in person. It is therefore that even the wealthiest among them and persons commanding greatest respect male or female are seen cooking meals and cleaning utensils in the Guru-ka-Langar, where all dine sitting in one and the same row (pangat) and partake of one and the same food regardless of the fact of one's descending from a royal lineage or having in hand a beggar's bowl or of being a Brahman or a Shudra. Again they have common bathing tank at Amritsar, Tarn-Taran, a Baoli at Goindwal, constructed by the Gurus themselves, where all are welcome to have a dip without the least distinction of caste or creed. When they join bands in congregational prayers, they place no bar on any body, may be of any nationality or professing any religion. Their common mess, common bath and common prayer with a common Holy Granth to revere and one common God of

all to pay their homage to, are the grand insignia to their deep rooted faith in one common brotherhood of man. They stand their congregation (Sangat) and their mess dinners (Pangat) are wonderful spectacles to look at. It is the universal brotherhood, a common-wealth of man in Sikhism that appeals to me to be a Sikh.

Because it is a faith based on Unity of God and Brotherhood of man. Love of God and service of humanity are the main themes with it. Human soul enchained in human body feels separated from God and it has to be reunited with Him. Love is not only uniting force. Service humanises and makes one tender-hearted and receptive—qualities essential for a loving heart. Love and service are hence enjoined upon every Sikh.

He quits his bed early before dawn, to get himself immersed in the love of his great Master, and with sunrise he devotes himself to the service of humanity performing all the time his routine duties with all sincerity and integrity—noble ideals for a man. To own these I earnestly aspire to be a Sikh of the Guru.

Thus spoke Guru Gobind Singh when he took me unto his fold—the Khalsa and enjoined upon me to stand always for righteousness, truth and justice and uproot the evil and the evildoors. I draw all my potency from Him alone and look to no other deity, god or goddess. I hold as an emblem of His unparalleled and unexcelled power to annihilate the vice and the vicious and fight for the humble and the unprotected. I have others to raise army of invulnerable soldiers, everyone of whom match his sword

with a lakh and a quarter. I shall draw them from the so-called Shudras and Vaishyas to humble the pretentious highcastes. I shall be true to my name only if I convert those lowly people into Sardars, Rajas and Statemen. My sparrows shall prey upon the hawk of tyranny and oppression. They shall safeguard the interests of the weak and the lowly and protect the honour and chastity of woman. I shall give them a distinct uniform that shall never be put aside—a saintly appearance and the valour of God made soldiers. I shall nourish no lamb or sheep but my Sikh shall always have swords on to meet aggression and offence. They shall be my saint-soldiers. "I call upon ye to join my army and defend the cause I have espoused, imbibe a warrior's spirit and always have my uniform on.

I shall be the symbol of your inner high spirits.

Be heroic but not ostentatious.

Let not vanity soil your serene self.

Be humble but suffer no humiliation, it damps your spirits.

Be of the world but spotless, people may not finger at you.

Be lovable and He will shower His blessings and love on you;

Meditate on His great qualities in the ambrosial hours before dawn and start your task of the day with a clear and guiltless conscience.

Let service and sacrifice be your watchwords in life.

Service of humanity and sacrifice of self to uphold truth and righteousness.

Entertain no fears, as it is but the Will of God that always prevails. Be chaste and respect the chastity of woman.

Suffer no intoxicants nor shall ye smoke.

I have named Ye, Singh.....a lion and you have therefore to forgo all sluggishness.

I have no place for cowards and you have therefore to discard all cowardice.

I have taken you unto my fold and you have therefore to be always in the costume of my fold, it gives you my appearance and you shall never disfigure it.

I have enlisted you a member of my commonwealth—Khalsa, the pure and you have therefore to be pure in thought, word and deed. The Khalsa meditates on the One Living, Divine Being with unshaken faith and love.

The Khalsa discards all gods and goddesses, idols, tombs hermits and monasteries.

The Khalsa recognises no fasts, pilgrimages, charities and austerities.

The Khalsa kindles in him one Divine radiant light, it is only that he is Khalsa, there then remains no difference between me and the Khalsa.

"Such a Khalsa belongs to my master Almighty, who has all victory to Himself. Victory is yours therefore, when you initiate yourself into the fold of the Khalsa. The initiation starts with the Amrita, the sweet drink consecrated with the Shabad (hymns) of Guru Nanak. I have stirred it with double edged sword of mine to steel the hearts of the Khalsa against timidity, cowardice, weakness and irresolution. You have to drink it from one and the same bowl to be one of the brotherhood, that recognises not your former caste, creed, colour or faith, and initiates you in a common fold irrespective of your previous sect or birth. In such a common-wealth of the Khalsa I see myself, rather my Master personified and to it I pay my homage in all humbleness in perfect devotion. Five of them—the Five Piaras (My beloved ones) shall administer the same Amrit to me, and initiate me into the fold of the Master's Khalsa.

Any five of the true Khalsa shall represent me and just as a candle enlightens another candle, the Five shall kindle the light of the Khalsa in who-so-ever desires to be so kindled.

This sermon makes me a Sikh.
